

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Justice Newsletter

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As we welcome Spring and new beginnings, the DEIJ Committee is happy to announce that we have finalized our school's DEIJ mission statement, shared it with the board, and they have approved it. We share it here with you and, as always, welcome your feedback. Committee members are Natasha Chang, Jen Grilly, Spring Ulmer and Phoebe Vaughan. Please contact Jen if you have any thoughts you'd like us to hear.

Bridge DEIJ Mission Statement

Bridge School actively works to embrace, honor, and celebrate the uniqueness of each person in our community and to recognize the ways in which their multifaceted experiences contribute to our school. We strive, with ongoing determination, to create an inclusive culture where all are welcomed, valued, empowered, and heard.

We are committed to developing, nurturing, and growing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice within all facets and among all stakeholders of our school. This commitment comes from our strong belief that diversity is a source of strength, excellence, joy, and creativity in our learning environment. We know that learning environments which foster diversity promote academic excellence, social-emotional growth, and more cohesive, healthy communities. Furthermore, we believe that hatred and bigotry in all forms is unacceptable and runs counter to Bridge School's values. We are committed to speaking out and taking action toward racial equity and social justice, challenging systemic inequity and oppression, practicing empathy, working to understand privilege, transforming conflict, and exploring creative solutions. We strive to foster in our community members a sense of hope, an impetus to act, and a firm belief that standing up for social justice and equity is the responsible and the right thing to do.

Our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice work has four pillars. Here are some examples of actions taken or to be taken in each pillar:

Educator Growth: *Professional Development, Training, Hiring Practices*

- We provide diversity, equity, inclusion and justice training and professional development opportunities for staff.
- We foster staff relationships built on trust, understanding, and shared commitment so that staff may give and receive feedback safely, vulnerably, and non-defensively, and in doing, so elevate their awareness of their own privilege and unconscious bias.

School and Classroom Climate: *Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Practices and Curriculum*

- We create and continuously re-evaluate curriculum so that it reflects the depth of our commitment to diversity and to a global and multicultural perspective.
- We value, make time for, and practice restorative justice so that harm can be repaired in a way that makes room for all voices and strengthens community.

Student Belonging: *Identity, Empathy, Inclusion*

- We honor each student's identity by using their preferred pronouns, correctly pronouncing their names, and learning about the stories and cultures behind them.
- Our classroom environments (posters, pictures, books, music, toys, and other materials) reflect diversity in terms of categories such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, age, and ability.

Community Cohesion: *Family/Guardian Education and Involvement, Town Partnerships*

- We provide information and tools to enable the community to act in accordance with the values of the school, engage in healthy discussion, and create an inclusive environment.
- We partner with local organizations, leaders, and community members in order to facilitate shared learning through community events and to uplift DEIJ work as a whole.

The Hillsboro City School District in California conceived of the Four Pillars

(<https://www.hcsdk8.org/Page/383>). Our conceptualization is based upon their valuable work.

News and Resources



Why LGBTQ Affirmation and Inclusion Matters in Elementary School

Bridge School's DEIJ mission statement reminds us that we are a school which "actively works to embrace, honor, and celebrate the uniqueness of each person in our community" - this includes diversity when it comes to gender and sexual orientation.

Elizabeth Meyer, an associate professor in the School of Education at the University of Colorado, Boulder [in an article in Psychology Today](#) points to several important reasons why we need LGBTQ+ affirmation and inclusion in elementary schools. She notes, for example, that:

- "Trans children know their identity as young as age two." She goes on to make the point that "schools need to be able to talk about gender diversity at early ages to challenge gender stereotypes and make room for kids of all gender identities to be seen, respected, and safe at school and in their community"
- "GLB kids know they are different as young as age five." As they build a sense of themselves, kids "need to be able to see and understand that there are many healthy, happy GLB people who have made a difference in our world."
- "Kids in GLBTQ families deserve to see their

lives reflected at school." Furthermore, "We know positive relationships with families and communities improve students' engagement at school, so it is essential to talk about GLBTQ people and families with students of all ages.

Meyer's last point is crucial. At the elementary level, children are learning all the time - about themselves and the world around them. But children can't learn unless they feel safe, seen, and supported. This is especially true for children from marginalized groups that experience less safety across the board. And children who belong to dominant groups - kids who generally feel safe, seen, and supported- are learning important lessons about respect, acceptance, and empathy. They are learning about their power to make a difference -by doing things such as using helping rather than hurting words, or by being upstanders rather than bystanders- and their power to create a school where all can thrive and grow.

Resources for LGBTQ Kids, Families, and Allies

- [LGBTQ Affirming Resources for Parents and Teachers of Kids Ages 3-12](#)
 - [LGBTQ History Books for Kids](#)
 - [LGBTQ+ Inclusive Books for Children and Young People](#)
 - [Talking to Young Children about Gender](#)
 - [Film Trailer for "Creating Gender Inclusive Schools"](#) (Full film is available for free via the streaming service Kanopy which is on the Ilsley Public Library website. All Bridge students are eligible for a free Ilsley card, and access to Kanopy.)
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